

**Veteran Day's Program
November 11, 2002
City of Duluth
Presented by CDR Nguyen**

Mr. Colalillo. Veterans. Mayor Doty. Other Distinguished Guests. Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning. I appreciate the opportunity to be part of this wonderful ceremony to honor and remember the sacrifices of our nation's veterans.

More than twenty years ago, I became a naturalized American citizen and entered the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. As an eighteen year-old, the significance of those events didn't really hit me then, but as I stand before you today, I am grateful for everything that this country has given me and proud to be an American serviceman.

America is a country of immigrants. We may not all share the same culture or religion, but we have two things in common. We came to this great land in search of freedom and to build a better future for our children. Over the last 226 years, together, we have built the greatest nation on earth. But the road to success has never been easy. Today, our country is in a state of war.

In times of war and peace, we look to our Armed Forces to protect our homeland and our national interests abroad. We expect the men and women in the military uniforms to stand a proper watch, deploy at a moment's notice, courageously charge into battle, hold a line at all costs, and achieve a decisive victory.

From the beaches of Normandy to the Chosin Reservoir to the caves of Afghanistan, our Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force, and Coast Guard veterans did just that. They faithfully lived up to their oaths, observed the Code of Conduct, and brought honor to our country. For the Coast Guard, Signalman First Class Douglas Munro comes to mind. He received the nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor, for his heroic efforts in evacuating 500 Marines during World War II.

Our veterans came from all walks of life. They could be your husbands, wives, sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters or friends. They may not have joined for the same reason, nor made it a career. Whether they were on active duty or in the Reserve or in the National Guard, they all have stepped up to the plate when our country needed them.

In their post-military careers, many of our veterans continue to make valuable contributions as mentors, teachers, and leaders in our communities. During my short tenure as the Captain of the Port Duluth, I had the privilege to speak to several volunteer organizations in the Twin Ports. I was highly impressed with the large presence of veterans in the audiences.

Our appreciation of our veterans has not always been the same as it is today. While national debate over use of the military is healthy, it is very important to let our troops know that we support them 100 percent. And when they return home, we need to pay the proper tribute to recognize their courage and sacrifice.

In 1918, we celebrated the First Veteran's Day as the end of the "War to end All Wars." We are hopeful people, but we know that the current "War Against Terror" will not likely be the last conflict that our nation will be involved in. Our continued freedom and prosperity depend on a strong national defense. We must remain engaged in the world and stand up when our national interests are threatened. If we don't, recent events have shown that it will be much more costly and difficult to deal with those problems after they have reached our shores.

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with these thoughts.

- Freedom is not free. On the walls of the Vietnam Memorials in Washington DC and downtown Duluth, you will find the names of forty-five Duluthians, who have made the supreme sacrifice for the cause of freedom.
- President Kennedy's famous words of "Ask not what your country can do for you – Ask what you can do for your country" rang true in 1961 as they are today. To maintain our democracy, it is our responsibility and duty to vote, to stay involved

in our democratic form of government, and to encourage others to exercise all their freedoms.

- Even if you cannot join the military, please understand that the safety and security of our homeland is an all-hand evolution. Please remain vigilant.

Thank you for having me here. Thank you to our veterans for all that you have done.

We salute you.